

come to the United States. I realize how he must love Elian. What, if not fear, could keep a person from making a 30-minute trip to reclaim his son? And what might Elian's father fear if not the authoritarian Cuban government itself? Could we send the boy back to a climate that may be full of fear without at least a fair hearing in a family court," Sister Jeanne asks.

Some would discount that this fear exists. Some would question that the regime takes any action that would instill fear. No, that would not be, they say. But imagine how intense the fear must be, how horrific the oppression and subjugation must be in Cuba, that thousands upon thousands of mothers and fathers risk their lives to bring their children to freedom here in the United States. Imagine how the spirit of the Cuban people is strangled by the Castro regime that they are driven to such desperate measures.

Imagine not being able to go to church or to turn to any religious leader for guidance or support because you would be arrested and interrogated. Where would those be who would doubt that there is fear in Cuba? What would they say to the dissidents who are persecuted because they want human rights, or to the political prisoners because they want freedom and democracy for Cuba? What would they say to the Cuban mothers and fathers who must relinquish control of their children's upbringing and education and leave it to the Castro regime, a regime which teaches children to read using books such as these:

This one, for example, is used to teach Elian and his classmates and it says, "G" is for guerrilla. It also includes songs such as the ones where the children pledge their devotion to Castro, to Che Guevara, and to other Cuban revolutionary leaders. This one, for example, says, "I want to be like him. I could be like him. I will have to be like him. Like whom," it says. "Like Che."

Is this the environment that Elian should be returned to without so much as an opportunity to have him speak and express his desires?

I ask that my colleagues search their consciences and let God guide their steps as they consider this issue.

□ 1730

URGING REPUBLICAN MEMBERS TO SIGN DISCHARGE PETITION ON H.R. 664, THE PRESCRIPTION DRUG FAIRNESS FOR SENIORS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, Congress is back in session. We heard from the President the other night, and he laid

out an agenda for this country of priorities that we need to work on during the course of this year. Many of those priorities in fact are the unfinished business of last year, when we did not accomplish all that we might have.

The issue that I want to address this evening has to do with the high cost of prescription drugs for our seniors, because there is a problem that in the past year has only become much worse.

Two years ago, in 1998, I first had a study done in my district that showed that seniors on average pay twice as much for their prescription medications as the drug companies' preferred customers. Those preferred customers are HMOs, hospitals, and the Federal government itself, which purchases drugs for Medicaid and for the Veterans Administration.

In October of 1998, we released a second study in the first District of Maine. That study showed that people in Maine pay 72 percent more than Canadians and 102 percent more than Mexicans for the same drug in the same quantity from the same manufacturer.

That price discrimination is going on all over the country. We have now had over 150 different studies, one study or the other demonstrating this price discrimination by the pharmaceutical industry against those who do not have insurance for their prescription drugs.

Seniors make up 12 percent of the population, but they buy one-third of all prescription medications. Seniors, 37 percent of them have no coverage at all for their prescription medications. About 8 percent have prescription drug coverage through a MediGap policy, but those Medigap policies are very limited in terms of their benefits. Often they are capped out at \$1,000 or \$1,500 per year. Often the policies cost more than the benefit that they provide.

About 8 percent of people in this country have prescription drug coverage through an HMO. Medicare beneficiaries have HMO coverage. But if we read the news about what is happening to HMOs providing coverage under Medicare, some of them are dropping coverage in areas entirely because it is not profitable. Most of them are lowering the cap that they provide for a benefit on prescription drugs, and most of them are increasing the premiums that they are asking people to pay.

So HMOs under Medicare are no way to provide secure, reliable coverage for prescription drugs. The fact is that the industry charges whatever the market will bear for prescription drugs, and they give discounts to big customers, to favored customers, they give discounts to Canadians and Mexicans and Europeans, but seniors in this country pay the highest prices in the world.

The fact is, the bottom line is that the most profitable industry in the country is charging the highest prices

in the world to people who can least afford it, including our seniors.

The bill that I introduced last year, H.R. 664, the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act, would deal with this problem by eliminating the price discrimination. The bill is very simple. It allows the government to negotiate lower prices for people who are on Medicare, people who are already in a Federal health care plan. It is called Medicare. It works, but it does not have prescription drug coverage, and it needs to.

All my bill would do is allow pharmacies to buy drugs for Medicare beneficiaries at the best price given to the Federal government, either the price given to the Veterans Administration or the price paid by Medicaid.

I thought that this bill would attract Members of the other side of the aisle when they understood it was a bill that created no new bureaucracy, it involved no significant amount of expenditure by the Federal government, and it would provide a discount of up to 40 percent for seniors in this country who really need the help and need it now.

But the truth is that though we have 140 Democratic cosponsors of this legislation, not one Republican, not one has seen fit to step up and cosponsor this legislation.

I grant that this is a battle. The pharmaceutical industry does not like this bill. The pharmaceutical industry is running TV ads all across the country touting what a wonderful, warm, and fuzzy industry it is, and how they do research and development that is important for the American people. About that, they are right. But what they are trying to do is block the President's prescription drug benefit plan. They are trying to block the progress that we are making in getting a discount for Medicare beneficiaries.

This is a huge battle. On this battle, the Democrats are lining up, taking on the pharmaceutical industry. We are going to be introducing a discharge petition to bring this bill to the floor next week. We would like to have some Republican support. I certainly hope at some point we will get it.

WISHING A HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO GLENYS BURQUIST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NETHERCUTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, February 3 marked a special day for a person close to my heart, for it was the 90th birthday of a wonderful woman with whom my family had a long association of close to 60 years. Her name is Glenys Burquist, and she was a legal secretary to my late father for 36 years, and a secretary to me for 18

years, until I was elected to Congress in 1994. She worked 2 years for my dear wife, who is also a lawyer, and she worked for 11 years before starting with my dad back in 1941 at the law firm that he joined that year.

Her job with our firm was the only job she ever had after becoming a legal secretary, and she was a great one, able to smooth the edges of an unhappy client, or make a happy client happier by her warmth and sense of humor.

I have never met anyone more loyal, more selfless, more honest, more diligent, more full of wisdom, more efficient than Glenys. She never let you know if she had a bad day. Despite a few health problems in her later years, she never has considered herself a victim of anything because she was too busy looking on the bright side of things.

Over the course of 60 years this woman, Glenys Burquist, typed the pleadings for thousands of adoptions that we did, thousands of probates, thousands of letters and other pleadings and real estate closings and minutes of corporations, and all the other things that go on in a law firm.

Before copy machines, she simply used carbon paper. In the late 1980s, she gave in and finally switched to a memory typewriter. That was about as far as she would go.

Unfortunately, in today's world, Glenys may represent the end of an era of employee stability and commitment. She never was looking for a better deal elsewhere, or griped about a little extra work that kept her after regular hours. For years she came into the office regularly for half a day on Saturdays, without any complaint.

Quite simply, Glenys Burquist is one in a million, an institution in the Spokane, Washington legal community, and a person so deserving of happiness and peace and respect and congratulations that this recognition hardly does her justice.

On behalf of the Nethercutt family and my wife, Mary Beth, especially, and all the lives she has touched, we wish Glenys Burquist the happiest of birthdays, and send our abundant love and respect.

IT IS TIME FOR MARRIAGE TAX RELIEF FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss an issue that was just on the floor less than an hour ago today. That was the marriage penalty elimination.

I must say, as a member of the Committee on Ways and Means, I was quite shocked. If Members listened to the entire debate, they would have heard the

hand-wringing and moaning and groaning from the other side of the aisle that somehow we were doing a terrible injustice to the United States budget, and that we were somehow going to bankrupt our Nation by providing necessary relief to married couples across this great land of ours.

In the committee, when we were marking up the bill, I heard many Members of the leadership on that side of the aisle describing things like giving taxpayers back some of their money as a bonus. Why are they giving people a bonus when they do not pay those taxes that are being claimed on marriage penalties? And if we are giving them more of their money back, that is a bonus?

Mr. Speaker, where I come from, every cent that the American taxpayer earns, a taxpayer who works hard 40-plus hours a week, some with two jobs, every cent that they send to this Capitol here in Washington, D.C. is their money, not ours.

But they on the other side have this nomenclature of bonus, surplus, and you name it. Then, of course, I heard today about the most important necessity established by that side of the aisle, which is pay down the debt, pay down the debt. I must have heard it 48 times today, if I heard it once.

I am glad they finally recognize that they need to pay down the debt that they have run up when they were in charge for well over 40 years, charging things to the American taxpayer, politically popular programs, but no means in sight to pay for them. Much like a reckless person with a credit card, they were ringing up the total, ringing up the purchase, not worrying about who is going to pay the bill.

We are at a day of reckoning. We have balanced the budget. We are putting money towards debt repayment. We paid over \$139 billion over the last 2 years in debt repayment. I think we are making wonderful progress towards debt repayment.

Remember, a few years ago when we, the majority, started this and decided to cut the capital gains tax from ordinary income to 20 percent, we heard again, you cannot do it, the markets will go crazy, you will bankrupt the Nation. Let us talk about what has happened: a record Dow, a record NASDAQ, higher income for all Americans, more money to the Treasury, surplus revenues.

Then the following campaign year when they argued against it, most took credit for it and said, I gave you a tax cut.

We gave a \$500 per child tax cut from this Congress because we believe raising children is expensive, and people need more of their own money back.

Those are just some of the things we did to make a difference in Americans' lives.

We also heard last year before we adjourned that we were dipping into so-

cial security, we were dipping into social security. Then new numbers came out in December that reflected the opposite. We did not touch social security. We kept our commitment. We kept our pledge. Our pledge was this: shore up social security, shore up Medicare, work on things for the average family and give them some tax reduction.

Today we passed the bill. After the contentious debate, hours on this floor, hours of hand-wringing, we actually got 268 votes for our proposal to eliminate the marriage penalty. Forty-eight Democrats and one Independent joined us. That is a bipartisan effort. I applaud those who had the courage to recognize the inequity of the Tax Code. Fifty-one thousand and twenty-one people in my district are paying a marriage penalty, and 1,176,000 throughout the great State of Florida are paying a marriage penalty.

We were on record today as moving forward to eliminate this tax burden on the average families who are working, who are struggling, who are providing for their children and their families in the districts in which they live.

Let us get out of the notion here in this Capital of Washington, D.C. that this is our money, because it is not. This money belongs to the taxpayers of America. Every chance we get, and I am telling the Members, seriously, we are working as a Congress on our side of the aisle to preserve social security, to preserve Medicare, to fix the problems.

Yes, we will meet, I am certain, in some accommodation on prescription drugs. I am certain of this. I know we need to do that. We will reach out in a bipartisan manner. But I have to tell the Members, I have just about had enough, because on some issues that are important to the other side of the aisle, this should be a bipartisan effort.

When we come to the floor on what we think is a bipartisan effort, 22 Democrats signed our bill, we would think there would be mutual admiration for the great work being done today. President Clinton, Vice President GORE, support some marriage penalty elimination. It is all the devil in the details. If it is not their bill, they are not happy and satisfied, and have to bellyache about the consequences.

Mr. Speaker, we will balance the budget. We will pay down the debt. We will shore up social security. We will fix Medicare. We will work on prescription drug coverage. We will also do the things that are necessary to help the American family, who are working oftentimes two jobs in order to make ends meet. We will work to make certain we have reached the threshold so they can at least have some of their own hard-earned money back in their pockets.

At the end of a 40-hour work, it is pretty difficult to go home and realize